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~ Browser-Security Link! ~ People Are Talking! ~ XXX Web Address OK!

~ eBay Buys Shopping.com ~ Old Hard Drive Safety ~ EmuTOS Updated!
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Well, it's officially the beginning of the unofficial summer season now that the long Memorial Day weekend is over. The weather, finally, has started to improve. The long weekend was okay, but not great. I did manage to finally get the lawn cut, or more like a meadow. In between the raindrops, I did get my vegetable gardens tilled, and my veggies planted. The flowers may get planted over the next couple of weekends. But first, we're hoping to get the swimming pool opened this weekend. We'll see.

While most of us were enjoying our holiday cookouts, many were celebrating the true reason for this holiday - remembrance of our military veterans who died during their service of their country. While I'm certainly no true advocate of war - especially one in which we're involved (I'm from the Vietnam War generation!) - I do support those who serve in the military. Service in the armed forces is one thing, the ultimate service is another. Remembering our friends, relatives, and neighbors who lost their lives while protecting us, and others worldwide, is something that I hope all of us took some time out from our holiday enjoyment to do.

Until next time...

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EmuTOS Version 0.8 Has Been Released

Thomas Huth has announced:

EmuTOS 0.8 --- May 30th, 2005

INTRODUCTION

EmuTOS is a single-user single-tasking operating system for the 32 bit Atari computers and emulators. It can be used as a replacement for the TOS images typically needed today for using emulators and it is also running on some

real hardware, like the Atari Mega STE. All the source code is open and free, licensed under the GNU General Public License (GPL).

CHANGES SINCE LAST RELEASE

- Improved GEM desktop (more comfortable, many bugs fixed, ...)
- New translations: Spanish and Greek.
- Most parts of the VDI have been rewritten in C for better maintainability.
- Nearly all Line-A functions have been removed/disabled (deprecated API).
- EmuTOS can now be compiled with GCC 3.x, too.
- graf_shrinkbox() and graf_growbox() have been enabled again.
- form-alert boxes now also work in ST low resolution.
- The AES behave much closer to the original Atari AES than before, so much more old programs are working now.
- And lots of other bug fixes and minor improvements

Have a look at the changelog.txt for more detailed information.

DESCRIPTION

EmuTOS is basically made up of six subsystems:

- The BIOS, which is the basic input output system
- The XBIOS, which provides the interface to the hardware
- The BDOS, which are the high level OS routines, what you know as GEMDOS
- The VDI, the virtual device interface - means the screen driver
- The AES, the application environment services or window manager
- The desktop, which is the graphical shell to the user

The BIOS and XBIOS code is our own development. It is really written from scratch and implements nearly all of the TOS 1.0 BIOS functionality, and a bit more, like e.g. hard disk access.

The GEMDOS part is based on Digital Research’s GEMDOS sources, which were made available under GPL licence in 1999 by Caldera.

The graphical parts like VDI and AES are now more or less fully implemented. They work in all the graphics modes of the original Atari ST. On some emulators EmuTOS can be patched to work with much bigger screen resolutions without any problems.

The desktop is not as nice as the original one, but is pretty usable now for a start. You are free to use a more advanced desktop replacement any time, like Teradesk for example.

Since EmuTOS just implements the TOS’s functionality, you might want to use MiNT on it in order to run more modern software. EmuTOS is not an alternative to MiNT. But EmuTOS is the only free base OS to boot MiNT.

HARDWARE

This is the currently supported hardware:

- CPU support for m68000, m68010, m68020, m68030, m68040
- FPU detected
- Memory controller (both ST and Falcon)
- Monitor type detection (mono or not)
- WD 1772 Floppy disk controller (write track not tested)
- DMA controller
- MFP
- PSG
- ST shifter
- STE shifter (partially)
- ACIAs, IKBD protocol, mouse
- MegaST Real-Time Clock (set clock not tested)
- NVRAM (including RTC)
- The native feature interface to some degree

AVAILABILITY

EmuTOS has its home at sourceforge:

    http://sourceforge.net/project›s/emutos/

A ready made EmuTOS image or the source can be downloaded from:

    http://sourceforge.net/project›/showfiles.php?group_id=36560

It is always available in source form from our CVS server at:

    http://sourceforge.net/cvs/?group_id=36560

If you are just curious or would like to help us develop this nice little OS, you are invited to subscribe to our Mailing list for developers at:

    http://sourceforge.net/mail/?group_id=36560

We hope that you like EmuTOS. If you have any suggestions or comments, we always appreciate to hear the good and also the bad things about it.

Your EmuTOS development team.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone and, with Memorial Day firmly behind us, the dog days of summer cannot be far behind.

It's Memorial Day that I want to talk about a little bit this week. I thought about mentioning it last week, but I didn't want to sound too preachy. Talking about it AFTER the fact seems a bit more fitting.

First of all, I'd like to say that I'm happy to see the strong support for our men and women who are currently serving in the military. Perhaps we, as a country, have learned something in the past half-century. Whether or not you agree with the current world situation, it's important to remember that there's a difference between the policy makers and the soldiers.

I don't know who coined it, but the phrase "All gave some, some gave all" has always meant a lot to me. I've had many relatives who have served in wars, police actions, and conflicts reaching back to World War II and, while they didn't all return to happy endings... or at all in some cases, they served honorably and well.

Not having served in the military in any capacity myself, I don't feel that I can say anything about "walking the walk". What I do feel able to say is that service is an almost sacred thing. We owe a great debt to this long line of men and women.

Over and above the fact that they run the very real chance of grave physical and/or psychological damage, they... serve. In my mind, it is the service that is of paramount importance.

That brings me to my main point: Service is important. Military, Policemen, Firemen? Yes, in my view, they all deserve our thanks and our respect. Not respect for respect's sake, but for their dedication and service to all of us. Politicians? I'm not quite ready to go there. <Grin>

But let's extend the thought a little bit. How about teachers? I can't think of a single profession that can match Education for importance to our future. Can you?

In short, friends and neighbors, there are many, many people who deserve our respect and thanks for their service. The trick, I think, is to remember that, and to aspire to the same thing ourselves.

Okay, enough of that. Let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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'Alison C' asks about battery-backed clocks for STs:

"I was wondering if it was possible to keep the time by applying backup power to the keyboard controller? Was also wondering if the ST booting up would reset the thing (and the time).

At the moment thinking about a 40-pin DIL header plug trailing off to a small board to hold the Hitachi PIC with a couple of NiMH 3.6v charging while the ST is powered.

Any views or experience in this??"

Stephen Moss tells Alison:

"As far as I know, the time and date are only reset at switch on because there is no backup clock, although I could be wrong, don't forget that if you want the date to be correct you have two problems.

1st, you will have to use some kind of 2K fix program to patch the date as the original clock memory space does not allow for dates beyond that, its possible that those used with cartridge based battery backed clocks will work.

2nd, even if you can patch the date for system display beyond the year 2000 the year shown on saved files may be either 00 or ** (I can't remember which off hand) not the clock year although this may depend on your TOS version. Anyone know of a software patch that can correct this?

I looked at adding a battery back up to the keyboard controller but abandoned it because I was looking at interrupting the power from the Keyboard to motherboard cable and decided that the battery would end up powering the entire keyboard PCB thus creating too large a drain on the battery, plus the file save date problem really rendered the whole thing useless.

Relocating the controller chip to another location is a much better idea, don't know why I did not think of that unless it was because I deemed it too difficult for people to fit themselves.

If the controller chip is in a socket thats not to bad but IIRC it is soldered into the board and thus not easy to desolder without the correct equipment. If you do manage to remove it have you considered how you are going to ensure that only the controller chip receives the battery power? If not you could use a diode with a low forward voltage drop (Schottky) that take power form the main supply when the ST is on (forward biased) but blocks the battery power when the main supply is off as it will be reverse biased although a FET would be better as it will have a lower voltage drop.

I was planning on using alkaline batteries in my design and so have never tried to build a battery charger so I can't help you there but you will have to look at this aspect carefully as charging them slowly might not charge them enough and charging them quickly may draw to much current from the main supply, plus you will ideally need some charged circuit to stop them from being charge once they are at their maximum capacity."

Alison replies:

"Oooooh Y2K, that old hat :-)

Following on from Phantom's post, Y2K seems to only affect the clock cartridges that plug into the cartridge port. Well, the clocks have no problem with Y2K but the software for the cartridges to transfer the info to the system clock are where things fall foul.

There's a site out there where they were talking all about the different TOS versions, saying Y2K affected TOS right up to version 3 or something. Then some bright spark said it was the software for the cartridges which was the problem.

Still haven't got round to getting the language disks and XCONTROL etc. sourced yet so not tried with the system clock directly yet. Next little job :-)

http://www.atarimagazines.com/v6n1/STProductNews.html "

David Bolt adds:

"It's not just the software for the clock cartridges that have a problem.

It also affects any system doesn't have a built-in RTC, in other words not MEGA STs/STEs, Falcons, and TTs."

Alison tells David:

"I would hope in the Sinclair Spectrum fashion
that TOS has been rewritten to accommodate?   :-)   By that I mean that the Spectrum ROM's have been modified to include changes and slight streamlines to the code.

In the meantime though, what I have dug out from the loft at my parents' is the June 1988 edition of ST World which has 4 A4 pages of clock write-ups, some cartridge based, some keyboard MCU power based.

Oh ok, I think I'll keep an eye out for a Mega ST to stop this in it's tracks. With the Y2K thing and the requirement for a battery measuring 1inch x 3inches x 1inch we're about done. Well, until I start thinking about it again."

Ludwig Maetzke asks about configuring Aranym (Atari Running on ANY Machine, If I remember correctly):

"This emulator appears as a disaster, especially EmuTOS.
Meanwhile I have entered the TOS404.img into the config file but the tos tries to store the desktop.inf on A: (floppy).

Then I entered into the config for C: and D: the corresponding folders of the unix directory, but cannot access them from the Atari-Desktop. Is this caused by the betaDOS missing? Where have I to enter the betaDOS in this case?

And how can I setup a resolution of 800x600? And how switch off the RAM test that is done when booting? And return to Linux without shutting down the Atari?

I haven’t found a documentation for the config file. Why can’t I buy aranym/Linux ready for use with legal TOS404 or TOS492?"

Patrice Mandin tells Ludwig:

"It’s because you don’t have hard disk images configured, so ARAnyM, like a real Atari, saves to floppy by default.

Yes, [You need betaDOS] or with MiNT with the needed XFS driver.

BetaDOS must be configured to use the needed BOS/DOS driver.

You need FVDI and the needed driver [to deal with the resolutions].

Use a standard NVRAM Falcon configurator, like bootconf [to turn off the RAM test].

Press shift+Pause [to switch back to Linux].

Some advice:

Subscribe to the ARAnyM user mailing list to post your questions. Few people in this newsgroup know about ARAnyM, and more about real Atari: http://bobek.sh.cvut.cz/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/aranym-user/

Try first by using the AFROS disk image: http://aranym.sourceforge.net/download.html

All the ARAnyM documentation is here: http://www.sophics.cz/cgi-bin/cvsweb/aranym/doc/ "

Ronald Hall asks about Atari videos:

"Hey gang. Is there anywhere on the ’Net that a person can download some of the old Atari videos from? I mean like, old commercials, interviews, announcements, things like that. I’d love to watch some of them again.

I just tried the Atari Historical Museum, and using Firefox, Galeon and Konqeruor, I get "page not found or displayed" messages. You can’t download them either, you just get a 3.9kb file or something like that."

’Dave’ tells Ronald:

"Try: http://www.theoldcomputer.com/Libarary’s/tv_adverts_summary.htm "

’TW Brown’ adds:

"You could also Google "computer cronicles" <sp?>. They have several episodes with Atari featured,one has Jack and Leonard in it when the St was first released."

Tero Sˆ/ˆ/relˆ/ asks about a way to check available memory:

"My friend got this 520 STE that he found for 1 euro from fleamarket. It works fine although it is a little hard to use without a mouse.

I had some SIMM memory (absolutely no idea how much memory in those combs) so we decided to throw those in the STE. We installed the SIMM combs and put the STE back together to see whether it would still boot up. The STE booted up nicely but there was no utility in GEM which would tell how much memory there is. Is an external application only way or is there any other way to check the amount of memory installed?"

Ronald Hall tells Tero:

"If you have the newer control panel, and the general setup CPX module, then you can click on "status" and it will show the amount of free ST Ram. It will give you an idea anyway."

Edward Baiz adds:

"I use a little program called memwatch. You just run it and it will keep track and display how much free memory you have. It also displays the total amount of memory. You can download it on the or net or just email me and I will send it to you."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Metal Gear Solid 4!
Bushnell Does It Again!
Destroy All Humans!
And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Metal Gear Solid 4 Is Currently In Development For Playstation 3

Konami Digital Entertainment America, a division of Konami Digital Entertainment, Inc., announced a new development team will be formed inside Konami Corporation. On April 1, 2005, Konami Corporation merged and consolidated its group companies. Accordingly, former Konami Computer Entertainment Japan West Team, lead by creator Hideo Kojima (Corporate

Officer, Konami Corporation), embarks on a new era as "Kojima Productions" inside Konami Corporation.

The newly formed Kojima Productions is proud to announce that Metal Gear Solid 4 is currently in development for the Playstation 3 next-generation computer entertainment system from Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Hideo Kojima's masterpiece, the Metal Gear Solid series, is highly acclaimed worldwide, with its breathtaking graphics, profound stories, intricate human drama, original game design and superlative gameplay. Also under development are two other exciting games in the Metal Gear series - Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and Metal Gear Ac!d 2 for the PlayStation Portable handheld entertainment system.

"Hideo Kojima's creations are world-renowned for their incredible high quality," said Kazumi Kitaue, Executive Corporate Officer in charge of America and Europe at Konami Corporation. "Konami Corporation constructed Kojima Productions in order to further promote his creativity. Konami will continue to develop new and exciting game content in order to offer innovative, interactive entertainment for the next generation of game consoles. Fans from all over the world will have their eyes focused on the new adventures Hideo Kojima is creating in MGS4." From infiltrating enemy compounds and man-made structures in MGS and MGS2, to the challenges of the jungle environment in MGS3, MGS4 brings a totally new concept and situation, resulting in the toughest Metal Gear infiltration mission ever devised. The game is set after the events of MGS2 and players will reprise the role of top secret agent Solid Snake with appearances by characters throughout the MGS series. With the addition of online capability, MGS4 is a leading product for "PS3" and will signal the dawn of a new gaming era for the MGS series.

"Consolidation within the Konami Corporation has brought about a new evolution for the Japan West Team," said Hideo Kojima, Corporate Officer at Konami Corporation. "We will be making a fresh new start as 'Kojima Productions.' We will emphasize creativity and deliver extremely high quality productions. I believe that creating games that maximize entertainment value is essential to the growth of the video game industry. We hope you will look forward to Metal Gear Solid 4 as the first of many new endeavors from Kojima Productions."

Kojima Productions combines the strengths of producer/director Hideo Kojima, producer Kenichiro Imaizumi, director Shuyo Murata, and character designer Yoji Shinkawa. Kojima Productions will concentrate its efforts and experience to take full advantage of the hardware capabilities of SCEI's next-generation console, infusing the world of Metal Gear Solid with completely new game designs and concepts.

Tecmo Announces Dead Or Alive 4 As Launch Title For Xbox 360

At the 2005 Electronic Entertainment Expo, Tecmo announced that it's highly anticipated next installment in its extremely popular Dead or Alive fighting series, Dead or Alive 4, will be the premier launch title for the next generation Xbox 360 video game and entertainment system from Microsoft this holiday season. Taking advantage of the superior technology of the new Xbox 360, Dead or Alive 4 will be the defining gaming experience on the next generation console as it will encompass all that Xbox 360 has to offer, giving players the most rewarding digital fighting experience to

date on any video game console.

Dead or Alive 4 will be the leader in fighting games as it once again raises the bar in both online and offline fighting. By utilizing the advanced technology of the new Xbox 360 hardware, Dead or Alive 4 will redefine 3-D high definition graphics as the attention to detail is astounding from each strand of the character's hair to each cherry blossom falling from the sky, creating the most visually beautiful and realistic looking video game to date.

Dead or Alive 4's unsurpassed online capabilities via Xbox Live will set the stage for all online 3-D fighting games to follow as more players will be able to play Dead or Alive 4 simultaneously online to compete in larger more impressive Xbox Live tournaments around the globe. Dead or Alive 4's online world will also include innovative and interactive online lobbies featuring voice and text chat, detailed online scoreboards, and an exciting feature that will allow DOA fans to form clans while playing Dead or Alive 4 on Xbox Live.

Dead or Alive 4 also boasts incredible new interactive stages, an all star line-up of old and new favorite characters, and the most complex DOA countering system yet, all adding up to the must-have video game to own along with Xbox 360 this holiday season.

Dead or Alive 4 plans to dominate the fighting game genre as one of the top launch titles for the new Xbox 360. Following-up this claim is the new breathtaking high definition cinematic trailer which debuted at Microsoft's annual press briefing on May 16, 2005 creating quite a stir among the audience of gaming press with its dramatic new footage, jaw dropping high-definition in-game graphics, and exciting new details into the world of Dead or Alive. Both Tecmo and Microsoft will be displaying the new Dead or Alive 4 trailer at their booths during all three days of E3 2005.

Destroy All Humans! To Ship

THQ Inc. announced the detection of paranormal online activity being tracked at www.alien-army.com. The Web site appears to be recruiting humans at an alarming rate in an effort to build awareness and understanding about the Destroy All Humans! video game, scheduled for release on the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and Xbox video game system from Microsoft, June 21, 2005, at the suggested retail price of $49.99.

Upon further investigation it appears the community of online brand ambassadors for Destroy All Humans! is exercising the power of the internet to create fan sites and blogs, participate in weekly contests, propagate Destroy All Humans! banner placement and achieve other initiatives to spread consciousness about the game to online hotspots visited by Alien Army members.

"We're here to make sure our alien friends are not misunderstood or misrepresented," said Wag, webmaster of AlienArmy.com. "I mean, sure the game is called Destroy All Humans!, but I don't think they really mean it. Why else would anyone who joins the Alien Army be granted access to the mothership, instead of being left on Earth?"

"Destroy All Humans is one of the most anticipated titles of 2005 and is another example of THQ's growing presence in the core gamer market," said

Peter Dille, senior vice president, worldwide marketing, THQ. "The game has a style and feel all its own, and we've been focused on delivering a marketing campaign as original as the title itself."

In addition to the inside track to the invasion, consumers who enlist in the Alien Army receives a personal e-mail account, exclusive game information and opportunities to win gift cards, games and much more. For more information on the video game or how to join the Alien Army, visit http://www.destroyallhumansgame.com.

Japan State Bans 'Grand Theft Auto' Sales

A state in Japan has decided to ban a U.S. video game from being sold or rented to minors, after officials deemed it harmful and capable of inciting violence.

"Grand Theft Auto III," produced by U.S.-based Rockstar Games Inc., was introduced in Japan in September 2003 and has sold about 350,000 copies. It depicts random killing sprees in public places, cars being blown up and other acts of violence that officials fear teens might try to mimic, said Takahito Hayashi, a child welfare official.

The game will receive a "harmful" product label in Kanagawa prefecture, or state, where retailers will be barred from selling or renting the game to anyone under age 18. The game also will have to be displayed separately from other titles, he said

While other products have faced similar restrictions due to explicit sexual content, it is the first time Japan has placed such measures on game software because of violence, Hayashi said.

Osaka-based Capcom Co. Ltd., which distributes the game in Japan, refused to comment.

Kanagawa prefecture, just south of Tokyo, includes major cities like Yokohama and Kawasaki.

Illinois Lawmakers Vote on Video Game Sales Ban

Lawmakers voted Saturday to ban the sale of violent or sexually explicit video games to minors in Illinois, a move other states and cities have tried but federal courts have repeatedly struck down.

The measure now goes to Democratic Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who proposed the ban late last year after hearing about the video game "JFK Reloaded," which puts the player in the role of President Kennedy's assassin.

"In today's world, parents face unprecedented challenges in monitoring and protecting their children from harmful influences. This bill will make their job easier," Blagojevich said, praising the House's 106-6 vote. The state Senate approved the bill earlier this month.

Under the legislation, clerks who knowingly sell adult video games to minors could be fined $1,000. They could defend themselves by showing they

did not know the buyer was a minor or that they followed the industry ratings on the games.

The legislation leaves it to stores to determine which games are too violent or sexually explicit for minors, and retailers have argued it turns them into violence and sensitivity police.

A federal judge last summer struck down a Washington state ban as a violation of free speech because it prohibited selling to minors video games depicting violence against police officers but not other depictions of violence. Federal courts have also struck down bans in Indianapolis and St. Louis County, Mo., saying the measures encroach on the First Amendment.

The judge in Washington state also determined the ban was too broad because it was unclear which games would be banned - something Illinois lawmakers say could be a problem with the legislation now headed to Blagojevich's desk.

"What we have is all we ever get - all fluff and no stuff," Republican Rep. Bill Black said.

But supporters insisted the government has a duty to help parents shield children from violence and sexuality. "Don't let them become the monsters that we see in these violent games," Democratic Rep. Monique Davis said.

Push for California Violent Video Game Bill Stalls

A bill before the California Assembly to ban the sale of violent video games has been shelved because of a lack of support, an aide to its author said on Friday.

Assemblyman Leland Yee has deactivated his bill after failing to muster enough votes for it to pass the full Assembly, said aide Adam Keigwin.

"We've put it in the inactive file," Keigwin said, noting there is a possibility Yee may ask lawmakers to revive the bill in the state Senate for a last-minute push this legislative session.

If not, Yee, a child psychologist, will bring his bill up for reconsideration in the state's next legislative session, Keigwin said.

"Dr. Yee is committed to this issue, but he wants to build more support for this bill," Keigwin said.

The Assembly's arts committee passed the bill early last month on a 6-4 vote after reconsidering it. The bill had previously failed to pass the committee when it fell a vote short of the necessary six votes.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, whose Hollywood film career includes violent movies, has not taken a position on the bill, which allows for $1,000 fines for violators and requires violent video games to be labeled.

The video game industry bitterly contested the bill, and it expects it will have to do so again. "I don't think the fight is over in California," said Doug Lowenstein, president of the Entertainment Software Association.

"We'll continue to wage this effort wherever we have to," Lowenstein added,

referring to similar bills in other state legislatures.

Video game developers and console makers say laws restricting game sales are unnecessary because their $10 billion industry does a good job stopping minors from buying "Mature"-rated games.

At This Restaurant, the Video Games Come With the Meal

Nolan K. Bushnell, the creator of the Pong video game and founder of the Chuck E. Cheese restaurant chain, is innovating again. He is about to open a restaurant where the servers will have novel attributes: triple redundancy and backup batteries.

In this case, the servers will not be human waiters but powerful central computers that will record food orders and display video games that customers can play while they eat.

Mr. Bushnell calls the concept the Media Bistro, and he plans to open the first one in West Los Angeles this fall. The point, he said, is to get gamers out of the house.

Video games today "are about social isolation," Mr. Bushnell said. "There needs to be a place that brings a little more balance and brings people together."

In an interview last week, he described how the 300-seat restaurant and bar would combine food and drink with ubiquitous interactive media. Touch-screen monitors, installed at every table, booth and barstool, will allow diners to place food orders, play some 70 different video and trivia games, and even take instant pop culture polls.

The monitors at the tables will be two-sided, so that two people, or two couples, will be able to play video games against each other. The restaurant will be divided into two sections, one with more casual gaming at the tables and another where games can be organized for large groups, as in bingo halls.

Projected onto the walls of the restaurant will be digital images ranging from movie previews to changing scenes, like snowfall in winter and clover fields on St. Patrick’s Day.

"There will be media everywhere, interactivity everywhere," said Mr. Bushnell, who is 62. "This is not going to be candlelight dinner."

Some game industry analysts, however, find it hard to imagine that consumers will want to combine a night out with playing video games, which they can do at home.

"Do I need to marry those two things?" said Michael Pachter, an analyst with Wedbush Morgan Securities. "It’s like saying you’re going to combine a restaurant and a barbershop."

Others, like P. J. McNealy, a video game industry analyst with American Technology Research, said the mass-market appeal of video games had led to an intersection with other forms of entertainment, like movies. Combining food and video games, Mr. McNealy said, "continues the trend of business model experimentation."

Given Mr. Bushnell’s successes as a serial entrepreneur and his experience with video games and restaurants, industry analysts said they were generally cautious about second-guessing his concept.

Even Mr. Pachter was quick to add that he would not have predicted the success of Pong, an arcade game introduced in 1972 that helped usher in the video game revolution. Nor, he said, would he have guessed the popularity of Chuck E. Cheese Pizza Time Theaters, a chain of 498 family restaurants that feature a variety of arcade games. Mr. Bushnell began the business in 1976; today the parent company of Chuck E. Cheese is CEC Entertainment.

Mr. Bushnell has also had a hand in developing or founding nearly two dozen companies, including Atari in 1972; Etak, a maker of in-car navigation systems, which he started in 1982 and sold to Rupert Murdoch in 1989; and Axlon, a toy company, in 1985.

Mr. Bushnell now runs a small public company called uWink, based in Los Angeles, which develops short-form video games, like poker and trivia games. He said the company had invested about $12 million in developing software for Media Bistro. He said he hoped the restaurant would attract 21- to 35-year-olds.

He said he expected the restaurant to turn a profit by holding down costs. Instead of waiters who take orders, it will have food runners who deliver orders to the tables.

The restaurant will also have "tour directors" who will help diners choose video games and use the screens, Mr. Bushnell said.

He also plans to generate revenue by using the touch-screens to test commercials and conduct consumer surveys on behalf of corporations. Could this be intrusive while people are relaxing?

"Beats me," Mr. Bushnell said. "If they don’t like it, we’ll stop it."

If the first restaurant succeeds, he said, he will add others, possibly in states like Minnesota and Michigan, where cold weather increases demand for indoor entertainment.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Time Running Out for Microsoft in EU Row

Time runs out for Microsoft this week after an antitrust ruling by the European Commission: it must either comply or face possible fines up to $5 million daily.

The Commission, which polices competition in the 25-nation European Union,

fined the U.S. software giant a record 497 million euros ($654.9 million) on March 24, 2004, and ordered it to change the way it does business.

Microsoft went to court to try to put off the remedy but lost. By that time Microsoft's time to comply had long run out but the company continued to delay, to the increasing consternation and frustration of the Commission.

That all is supposed to change on June 1.

"The deadline is the end of this month and if it's not met then it's the end of the game," European Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes said last week in Madrid.

Microsoft must make its ubiquitous Windows operating system available without Windows Media Player, so computer makers could buy alternative software, to play films and music, from RealNetworks and Apple.

The company must also share information with rival makers of servers used to run printers and retrieve files, an issue known as interoperability. The company was also supposed to propose a trustee to monitor its compliance.

Kroes met Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer in May and discussed the situation with him.

"We made a deal that before the end of the month we would reach an agreement. We are waiting for the Microsoft people to do their homework," Kroes told Reuters last week.

As a practical matter, that means that Microsoft must put in its final proposal to comply with requirements by Wednesday and the Commission may take some time to consider whether it complies.

The Commission could fine Microsoft up to $5 million daily for failure to comply with the sanctions imposed on it. But that would require it to open a special proceeding with charges and a decision by the Commission.

However, there is little to decide and the Commission has full authority to judge whether its ruling is being followed.

Some experts speculate that the decision to fine could come by the August recess of the Commission.

Microsoft has said it working hard to co-operate with the Commission.

Anti-Spyware Bills Pass House, Move to Senate

The U.S. House of Representatives last week overwhelmingly passed two separate anti-spyware bills, but as the measures now move to the Senate, legislators will find most of the hard questions unresolved-a familiar scenario in Congress, where similar House bills withered last year following Senate inaction.

The SPY ACT (Securely Protect Yourself Against Cyber Trespass), authored by Rep. Mary Bono, R-Calif., takes the more active approach, requiring a conspicuous notice to users before transmitting spyware.

The SPY ACT largely resembles the Senate's SPYBLOCK (Software Principles

Yielding Better Levels of Consumer Knowledge) bill, sponsored by Sens. Conrad Burns, R-Mont.; Ron Wyden, D-Ore.; and Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. The sponsors are awaiting a date for a committee hearing on the bill and hope to have one before the end of the summer, an aide to Burns said.

Alternatively, the Internet Spyware Prevention Act, authored by Rep. Bob Goodlatte, R-Va., focuses on penalties for fraudulent or deceptive behavior without targeting any particular technology-an approach favored by the IT industry.

Goodlatte's bill, which passed the House 395-1, makes it a crime to intentionally access a computer without authorization by causing code to be copied onto the computer and using it for malicious purposes.

From the industry's perspective, the Goodlatte approach avoids the possibility of ensnaring legitimate software downloads, such as security patches.

IT managers, who are employing a growing array of technologies to combat spyware themselves, widely applaud the legislative initiatives as a supplement to their own efforts.

Jeff Smestuen, network manager at Blue Bell Creameries L.P., in Brenham, Texas, said spyware and other unwelcome traffic have increased exponentially on his network in the past 18 months.

"Most of [the data mining programs] are crap software. They take up a lot of resources on your machine, and they can take a machine down to a crawl," Smestuen said.

As for the legislative approach to reducing spyware, Smestuen said he supports both a notice requirement and tough criminal penalties.

"The only way you should get those kinds of programs is if you agree," Smestuen said. "I think of spyware and spam as theft and an intrusion. It's costing me money and productivity. The laws need to be strict, and the penalties have to be severe."

Many Unaware of Browser-Security Link

Many American online computer users are unaware that choice of browser affects Internet security, and few switch browsers even when they know the risk, a Norwegian study said Monday.

The Oslo-based browser-maker Opera Software ASA, which touts its own browser as being one of the most secure, released a survey of 2,835 online users in the United States, which indicated that only 51 percent of what it called the "adult online population" were aware that the type of browser can affect a computer's vulnerability to malicious software, such as viruses and spyware.

The poll, first released to The Associated Press, also showed that only 11 percent of those asked said they had switched browsers for security reasons. The survey was conducted in March 25-29 by the Harris Interactive polling group and had a margin of error of about 5 percentage points.

Malicious software often targets a specific type of browser, and generally

those that are the most widely used. The poll said that 49 percent of those asked did not know that their choice of browser can make a difference, including 17 percent who thought it had no effect.

Although a small percentage said they had switched browsers for security reasons, 66 percent said they would consider a change if it would improve security.

"Changing to a more secure browser is one of the simplest ways for Web users to make surfing safer and minimize the risk of falling victim to virus, spyware or ’phishing’ attacks," said Opera’s chief technical officer Haakon Wium Lie, referring to various techniques of tricking Internet users to hand over personal information, such as credit card numbers and passwords.

The tiny Norwegian browser company claimed that Internet security upgrades were a key part of its Opera 8 version, released last month. Among the features is a special window that rates the security of the page visited on a scale of one to three.

Opera commands less than 0.2 percent of the Windows market, far behind the industry leading Internet Explorer from Microsoft Corp. and various open-source browsers, such as Mozilla Firefox.

MSN Site Hacking Went Undetected for Days

Password-stealing software planted by hackers was active on Microsoft’s popular MSN Web site in South Korea for days before the world’s largest software company learned about the break-in and removed the computer code.

Police investigators and Microsoft specialists are continuing to search for clues to the culprits behind this week’s high-profile computer break-in. More details emerged Friday about the hacking, which targeted subscribers of an online game called "Lineage" that is popular in Asia.

Microsoft Corp. said it had cleaned the Web site, www.msn.co.kr, and removed the software code that had been planted on its news page. It said another company that operates the MSN Korea site apparently failed to apply necessary software patches, leaving its server computers vulnerable.

Security researchers at San Diego-based Websense Inc. discovered the break-in late Sunday during routine scans it makes against more than 250 million Web sites each week looking for sources of viruses and other infections.

A previous inspection by Websense of the MSN Korea site the evening of May 27 did not detect the dangerous software.

"Our alarms went off (Sunday). We noticed it was infected," said Dan Hubbard, its senior security director.

Hubbard said Websense researchers investigated further and quickly updated protective software to keep its own corporate customers safe. It did not successfully reach Microsoft officials to warn them about the break-in until midday Tuesday, a day after the Memorial Day holiday weekend.

Microsoft said it removed the password-stealing software from the MSN site

hours later.

The chronology suggests the hackers could have harvested stolen passwords from visitors to the MSN site for up to three days. But their target - passwords to game accounts - lessened the significance of the break-in since the hacker software appeared not to collect any network or banking passwords.

The Lineage game and its successor boast more than 4 million subscribers, mostly in Asia, who pay about $15 each month, said Mike Crouch, a spokesman for the U.S. subsidiary of South Korea-based NCSoft Corp. Crouch said he was unaware of any significant increase in complaints by subscribers about stolen passwords tied to the Microsoft break-in.

South Korea is a leader in high-speed Internet users worldwide. Microsoft's MSN Web properties - which offer news, financial advice, car- and home-buying information and more - are among the most popular across the Web.

A Microsoft spokesman, Adam Sohn, said the company was confident its English-language Web sites were not vulnerable to the same type of attack.

Can You Trust Your Spyware Protection?

The next time you run a scan with your anti-spyware tool, it might miss some programs. Several anti-spyware firms, including Aluria, Lavasoft, and PestPatrol, have quietly stopped detecting adware from companies like Claria and WhenU - a process called delisting. Those adware companies have been petitioning anti-spyware firms to delist their software; other companies have resorted to sending cease-and-desist letters that threaten legal action.

In most cases it's difficult for customers to determine whether their anti-spyware tool has delisted anything and, if so, which adware it skips.

"When a spyware program gets delisted, users won't be aware of its presence," says Harvard law student and spyware researcher Ben Edelman. The practice, he says, "offers spyware makers a new lease on life, letting them keep users who otherwise would have removed their software."

Of course, some spyware apps are worse than others. One spyware program may make severe changes to your computer's settings, while another merely displays ads.

Claria and WhenU are making the case that their adware programs don't resort to illegal tactics, such as exploiting security holes, to install themselves. And though this software can be annoying, adware developers argue that merely being listed in an anti-spyware scanner's database tarnishes a company's reputation by linking its relatively benign adware application with far more harmful and intrusive spyware programs.

According to Avi Naider of WhenU, though some other adware companies will track your Web meanderings and sell that data, WhenU's privacy policy doesn't permit it to track the search queries that users type or the Web pages that they browse.

Each anti-spyware firm uses its own set of criteria to decide whether to

remove or detect a file or Registry key related to spyware. Usually even a few bad behaviors suffice to red-tag a file as spyware or adware.

Peter Mackow of PCTools, maker of the Spyware Doctor anti-spyware program, says that his company won't publish the entire list of its criteria for fear that spyware companies will use the information to design a spyware application that skirts every rule. That is a position shared by many others who fight spyware.

"The spyware guys want a really rigid set of rules defining spyware so they can then make an end run around [all of them]," says Eric L. Howes, who tracks the spyware business for Spywarewarrior.com and consults for anti-spyware software companies.

Experts recommend that you employ two--or even three--anti-spyware tools. The more you use, the likelier they are to counter the individual biases of each anti-spyware company.

It's unfair to permanently blacklist a company based on its past behavior, so some delisting is inevitable. But delisting an adware application is a dangerous proposition for anti-spyware developers. In the past, some spyware and adware makers have changed their software enough to get delisted only to resume the activity that got them flagged in the first place.

As a result, the anti-spyware industry has developed a thick skin. Delisting is rare because, Edelman says, anti-spyware firms "stand up to strongly worded demand letters."

Adware companies also decry the word spyware itself as inherently negative, so some anti-spyware firms have tried to create terms that mean essentially the same thing, using more-neutral language: grayware, potentially unwanted programs, or potentially unwanted software. But Webroot's CEO David Moll argues that matters could get more confusing if the anti-spyware companies try to refer to spyware by other names, just when many people are beginning to understand what spyware can do.

Mytob, Bagle Variants on the Prowl

Security firms are reporting a jump in the number of variants of the Mytob and Bagle e-mail viruses.

Mytob uses its own e-mail engine to mail itself to addresses in the contact list of infected computers. Bagle downloads Trojan code from a variety of Web sites and then uses that code to gather e-mail addresses from infected computers.

Fortunately, neither virus is particularly damaging.

When new versions of viruses appear, said Thomas Kristensen, CTO of security firm Secunia, they often contain enough code from the previous versions that anti-virus software is able to detect them even if its virus definition tables have not been updated.

Such is the case with Bagle. Its new iterations appear to be encountering significant resistance from virus software currently in place on networks and individual computers. Bagle currently has about 70 variants and has

been circulated on the Internet since January of 2004.

The new variants of Mytob, however, seem to be more successful. "Some of the variants have been able to escape previous patterns," Kristensen said, allowing them to spread more quickly than the new Bagle variants.

Both viruses depend on users who do what security experts for years have been warning them not to do: Clicking on attachments in e-mails delivers the payload for both viruses. "These are fairly normal virus outbreaks," said Kristensen.

"Socio-engineering" is the term used by experts to describe how writers of malicious code trick users into launching viruses delivered via e-mail. In the case of one of the new Bagle variants, the infected e-mails have no subject line and no message text. An attached ZIP file retrieves the Trojan code when opened.

Spyware Software Dubbed ’Ransom-ware’

An apparently bogus anti-spyware tool is the newest addition to the expanding "ransom-ware" category of malware, Panda Software said Tuesday.

Ransom-ware, the term some have slapped on malicious code that infects a PC, then demands money in return for cleaning up the machine or unlocking suddenly-encrypted documents, is just another example of how hackers are increasingly driven by greed, Luis Corrons, the director of Panda’s research lab, said in a press release. Now, said, Corrons, a purported anti-spyware product, SpywareNo, joins the list of ransom-ware.

Surreptitiously downloaded when users visit certain porn or pirate Web sites, SpywareNo exploits vulnerabilities in Microsoft’s Internet Explorer to get onto a PC. Once it installs itself, it creates an icon on the desktop and displays a bogus warning that the system’s infected with spyware, Corrons said. (It also modifies the Windows Registry to guarantee it runs every time the PC is started, even after the user thinks he’s managed to manually delete the program.)

The warnings are as fake as a $3 bill.

The on-screen alert invites users to purchase the full version ($20 for a month’s subscription, $60 for an annual plan); only those who pay the ransom see the "threats" disappear.

"If users fail to register, this commercial software will ’detect’ threats that don’t actually exist on the computer, and which will ’disappear’ as soon as users pay for the product," said Panda in its own warning.

In a release posted to the Spyware Warrior anti-spyware message forum, someone claiming to be the public relations manager for SpywareNo took exception with the ransom-ware categorization, and blamed the drive-by-installs on out-of-control affiliates.

"The spyware removal software market is so overcrowded," wrote someone identifying herself as Jessica Simmons. "The competition is very very hard. That is why we direct all our efforts to development itself and have no time and power to advertise our products effectively. We use affiliated advertisers to do this. This is an easy way for us. This way is a very

dangerous though. It is a shame that some of our advertisers do not respect the law, but unfortunately we are unable to check them all at the initial stage."

The poster went on to say that SpywareNo "does not install silently or without permission," and that any such instance is due to "those unprincipled advertisers."

End-users commenting to the dslreports.com message forum, however, say different. One said SpywareNo got installed "out of nowhere," while Eric Howes, a graduate student at the University of Illinois, a contributor to the Spyware Warrior site and list, noted "the [SpywareNo] scanner turned up eight listed spyware programs, all ’high risk’ in just two seconds. Even a scan of the processes [running in Windows] takes five or six seconds. That’s a big red flag," he said. "SpywareNo wasn’t actually scanning anything at all.

"Within 48 hours of the first report we had of SpywareNo, we had reports from all over the place," said Howes. "The fact that the reports came from a number of different sources, at about the same time" indicate that it had been seeded on multiple Web sites.

Phony spyware detection isn’t a new tactic, said Howes, who compared SpywareNo’s approach to others, such as Spywiper and SpyWareAssassin, two products which have been investigated by the Federal Trade Commission.

"They’re guilty of unfair practices, just as was SpyWareAssassin," Howes alleges. "But I think Panda is on to something by classifying it as ’ransom-ware.’

"SpywareNo has been irresponsible at best," he added. "I’ve stopped listening to that ’our affiliates did it’ excuse years ago. Even if its’ true, they’re still responsible."

Attempts to contact SpywareNo, which according to the alleged public relations spokeswoman, is based in Istanbul, were unsuccessful.

EBay to Acquire Shopping.com for $620M

EBay Inc. said Wednesday it would acquire comparison shopping and consumer review site Shopping.com Inc. for about $620 million in cash.

Executives at the San Jose, Calif.-based online auction giant said the purchase, expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2005, puts eBay sellers in touch with a new set of potential buyers and boosts the number of fixed-price sales listings, which are growing more popular with online shoppers.

The deal also expands the auctioneer’s efforts to provide more reviews and customer feedback about products listed on the site. Brisbane, Calif.-based Shopping.com controls Epinions, a site containing more than 400,000 amateur reviews on items ranging from computer servers to mountain bikes.

"Shopping.coms comparison technology simplifies the online shopping experience, and the Epinions community of reviewers is a great match with our own," said Bill Cobb, president of eBay North America.

According to the terms of the deal, eBay will acquire all outstanding shares of Shopping.com stock for $21 per share in cash, a premium over its $17.44 close on NASDAQ Wednesday, before the deal was announced.

Laptops Now More Popular Than Desktops

In a sure sign that the era of mobile computing has arrived, notebooks have for the first time outsold desktops in the United States in a calendar month, the research firm Current Analysis says.

After tracking sales from a sampling of electronics retailers, Current Analysis says notebook sales accounted for 53 percent of the total personal computer market last month, up from 46 percent during the same period last year.

San Diego-based Current Analysis does not follow worldwide personal computer sales.

Spurring demand for notebooks is their overall price drop as quality has improved, says Sam Bhavnani, senior analyst for Current Analysis. "Just a few years ago, the performance of notebooks was nowhere near where it is today," he said.

Notebook prices fell 17 percent during the past year while desktop prices dipped only 4 percent. Some of the features common in most notebooks are longer-lasting batteries, CD burners and wireless capability.

The computing crowd is increasingly requiring mobility.

Last year, 80 percent of notebooks offered wireless; this year, it’s 95 percent, Current Analysis says.

"There used to be a time when people expected a reply to an e-mail within a couple of days. Now they expect a response within 24 hours. People want to stay connected wherever they are," said Bhavnani.

Notebooks will continue to grab bigger shares of the PC market, Bhavnani predicted. "You’re not going to see the desktop go away though."

Discarded Hard Drives Still Contain Data

A study commissioned by the German firm O&O Software, a developer of hard-drive utilities, found that of 200 hard drives purchased through eBay, 71 percent had data that could be reconstructed.

The company did a similar study in 2004 and found that 88 of 100 disks bought through the auction site contained easily recovered data.

"In 2005, the results show a small improvement," the report noted. "However, even when the percentage of recoverable data on the tested hard disks has fallen, the ’quality’ of the recovered data has improved dramatically."

The information that O&O was able to reconstruct from the drives included

legal correspondence from government agencies, credit ratings, and documents related to a case of embezzlement.

On one disk, which the company nicknamed "the onion drive," information was recovered from three previous owners who did not seem to be related personally or professionally.

Although some of the drives belonged to home users, many were formerly owned by companies.

"It is astounding to hear from administrators working in companies who believe that since all of their data are saved on a central server, no important data are stored locally," the report said.

Since the second-hand market is experiencing booming growth, O&O's study should serve as a caution for CIOs seeking to offload equipment.

"Technology is changing very quickly, and more companies are eager to get rid of their old equipment," said Kory Bostwick, president of PC Disposal, a refurbishment company that has seen over 300 percent growth in the past year.

"As companies get ready to clean their closets, though, drive cleansing should be more than just an afterthought," he said. "Considering that trade secrets or other sensitive information could be on the drives, the company could be opening itself up for a lawsuit or identity theft if it's not careful.

Are You Addicted to E-Mail?

U.S. residents are so hooked on e-mail that some check for messages in the bathroom, in church, and while driving, a new survey sponsored by America Online has found.

The average e-mail user in the U.S. has two or three e-mail accounts and spends about an hour every day reading, sending, and replying to messages, according to the survey, conducted by Opinion Research.

E-mail dependency is so strong for 41 percent of survey respondents that they check their e-mail inbox right after getting out of bed in the morning. The average user checks his inbox five times per day, according to the survey, which polled 4012 respondents at least 18 years old in the 20 largest U.S. cities.

About a fourth of respondents acknowledged being so e-mailholic that they can't go more than two or three days without checking for messages. That includes vacations, during which 60 percent of respondents admitted logging into their inbox.

Unsurprisingly, all that e-mail activity sometimes leads to regrets. Almost half of respondents - 45 percent - indicated they would like to have the ability to retrieve a message they have sent but that hasn't been read yet.

There is as well, it seems, some attachment anxiety to sent messages. A significant portion of respondents - 43 percent - would like to be able to track where their messages get forwarded.

Finally, areas in which it's more likely to find e-mail junkies are, in

descending order: Miami/Fort Lauderdale, San Francisco, Philadelphia, New York, and Houston.

Some tips for those interested in curbing their e-mail compulsion:

Resolve not to check e-mail after a certain hour of the night and respect the curfew.Often the best way to close the loop on an ongoing e-mail discussion is to pick up the phone and call the other person.The next time you find yourself complaining about the volume of e-mail you receive, look at yourself in the mirror and reflect on how many messages you send out.Act on every e-mail you open by deleting it, forwarding it, responding to it or filing it.Go without e-mail one day per week.

Internet Group OKs 'XXX' Web Addresses

The Internet's primary oversight body approved a plan Wednesday to create a virtual red-light district, setting the stage for pornographic Web sites to use new addresses ending in "xxx."

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers said it would begin negotiations with ICM Registry Inc., run by British businessman Stuart Lawley, to iron out technical issues and prices for the new Web addresses.

Adult-oriented sites, a $12 billion industry, probably could begin buying "xxx" addresses as early as fall or winter depending on ICM's plans, ICANN spokesman Kieran Baker said. The new pornography suffix was among 10 under consideration by the regulatory group, which also recently approved addresses ending in "jobs" and "travel."

ICM contends the "xxx" Web addresses, which it plans to sell for $60 a year, will protect children from online smut if adult sites voluntarily adopt the suffix so filtering software used by families can more effectively block access to those sites. The $60 price is roughly ten times higher than prices other companies charge for dot-com names.

"It will further help to protect kids," said John Morris, staff counsel at the Washington-based Center for Democracy and Technology. Morris predicted some adult sites will choose to buy "xxx" Web addresses but others will continue to use dot-com.

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